

Testimony in support of SB 221
January 22, 2009
To the Senate Judiciary committee

Presented by:
Jane Heath, 7185 Gunn Road, Helena 59602 458-7010

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I'd like to thank Senator Tropila for introducing and sponsoring this bill, and the Judiciary Committee for this hearing.

My name is Jane Heath and I am the executive director of Montana Horse Sanctuary and have been a professional equine therapist for 13 years. I have lived in Montana all my life. I've lived with animals all my life and currently share my home with nine horses, three dogs and four cats. Of those 16 critters, 13 were either rescued or adopted from shelters. I'm here today to support the passage of Senate Bill 221.

In my profession I rehabilitate starved, abused and abandoned horses but I'm clearly also a dog and cat person. In my profession I've had the horrifying and unfortunate experience of witnessing the cruelty and neglect hoarders can inflict on innocent animals. In all cases these animals have suffered immeasurably and needlessly. All animals are sensitive beings who feel pain and suffering. Starvation and other forms of physical abuse often result in on-going health issues which may take a long time to resolve or may even last throughout the rest of an animal's life.

Hoarders are truly their own classification of animal abusers. I'm not a psychologist but the hoarders I've met have quite clearly been mentally ill and out of touch with reality. They seem to have no ability to recognize that the animals in their care are suffering. These people need mental health care and their animals need the protection of the laws of Montana. The animals are the innocent parties in these cases.

I urge you to help law enforcement agencies in Montana to better enforce animal cruelty cases with the passage of Senate Bill 221. Thank you.